

# Assessment: Expectations of Middle States

Assessment Forum

President's Conference Room #1

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# Outcomes Assessment Committee

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## Standard 14

### Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

from:

Characteristics of **EXCELLENCE** in Higher Education -  
Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation  
MSCHE

[http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX06\\_Aug08REVMarch09.pdf](http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX06_Aug08REVMarch09.pdf)

Leading up to the Higher Education Act of 2008, accrediting agencies hired a lobbyist to forestall a one-test-for-all approach.

Middle States supports individualized assessment approaches at the institutional, program and course level.

## Five Rules

- Keep it useful
- Tie assessments to important goals
- Include some direct evidence (the kind a critic wouldn't argue with)
- Use multiple measures
- Keep doing something every year

*from Linda Suskie, Vice President  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education*

## **What Middle States Will Look For During a Visit**

- Individual assessment findings/reports/uses by program (not course).
- You can create a grid with a list of programs along the left side and along the top, the institution's determination of where each program is:

|                | Has learning goals for program level and each course syllabus | Has plan to assess | Has assessed some/all | Has Results | Using Results | Has documentation of how results were used |
|----------------|---|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|--|
| Program #1     |   |                    |                       |             |               |  |
| Program #2     |   |                    |                       |             |               |  |
| Program #3     |   |                    |                       |             |               |  |
| Program #4     |   |                    |                       |             |               |  |
| Program #5     |   |                    |                       |             |               |  |
| ...Program #50 |   |                    |                       |             |               |  |

- Want to see rubrics so they can see if they align with goals.
- After several years of emphasizing assessment, Middle States is now expecting institutions to be close to doing 100% of what is needed for assessment, not just having plans. . . .

- Want to see samples of student work including what got an F and what a C, to show rigor.
- Assessment information does not all have to be in one, single fancy format.
- Where most institutions have the most trouble with assessment is in using the results to then make changes; the loop must be closed. The “loop closing” doesn’t have to be complicated- just shouldn’t be “we’re discussing this.”
- Would like to see an online folder or notebook for every degree program, including for liberal arts.
- All syllabi should have statements of learning outcomes.
- All assessment information does not need to be quantitative.
- Middle States is not looking for elaborate data systems, and they do not seem to recommend buying software to do assessment unless it’s necessary (e.g., for NCATE).
- Must show that campus has regular program reviews that include student learning outcomes.
- Focus should not be on assessment results themselves, but on using the results to improve.

(Linda Suskie, March 2009)

## Queens College Self Study – February 2007

1. The existing Outcomes Assessment Committee, chaired by the Associate Provost, should be enlarged and encouraged to take a wider and more proactive role across campus in promoting, explaining, and coordinating assessment efforts. Once outcomes data are collected, for example, the Committee could work with administration to disseminate these findings, and to create forums through which such information can be utilized to make decisions on program improvement.
4. The incoming general education requirements should maintain outcomes assessment as an integral part of the implementation of this new program. . . .
5. The College should continue to invest in appropriate information technology resources to enable evaluation efforts like the NCATE test to expand throughout the College, to help students develop **portfolios**, and to facilitate other tasks such as analysis.
6. One crucial aspect of the College's educational mission that has not yet been effectively assessed is the effort to teach tolerance and celebrate diversity in our increasingly global world. . . . the College should study how successfully it promotes access, tolerance, and mutual understanding to the full range of our diverse student body, whether distinguished by physical disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/provost/MidStates/Self-studyFINAL7MarchLV.pdf>



Figure 15

## Using Assessment Results at the Program Level: Preparing Students for Future Success

| Learning Goal:<br>Students will...                                 | Direct and Indirect<br>Measures  | Outcome  | Possible Reason or<br>Hypothesis   | Action Taken   |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Be prepared for<br>graduate and<br>professional degree<br>programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Departmental survey of graduating seniors and recent alumni</li><li>* Data from benchmark institutions</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Student admittance rates to graduate and professional programs are low, compared to similar institutions' rates.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Students are not being "coached" about the graduate school application process.</li><li>* Students have not been exposed to experiences (e.g., undergraduate research) that enhance their chances of graduate school admissions.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Enlist junior faculty members who have recently finished graduate school to develop a coaching program.</li><li>* Incorporate a research, scholarship, or practicum requirement for students in a graduate or professional school "track."</li></ul> |

from **Student Learning Assessment**, MSCHE

[http://www.msche.org/publications/SLA\\_Book\\_0808080728085320.pdf](http://www.msche.org/publications/SLA_Book_0808080728085320.pdf)

## Step One – Syllabi

- \* Follow guidelines and models at:

[http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/provost/Cur\\_stud/ModelSyllabus2009MARCH12.htm](http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/provost/Cur_stud/ModelSyllabus2009MARCH12.htm)

- \* Incorporate learning goals that connect with the narrative, assignments, and schedule. Learning goals should be approved at the department level.

- \* Insure that every line in the syllabus adds value for the student.

- \* Collect all syllabi within department, and provide feedback.

# Learning Goals

- \* Focus on outcomes, not process
- \* Clear – no “fuzzy” terms
- \* Observable, use action words
- \* Are goals important, lasting?

Critique these fuzzy examples:

Demonstrate understanding of other cultures.

Demonstrate ability to work effectively with computer components.

Adapted from Linda Suskie, York College presentation, 3/09

## **Step 2 – Select a task or tasks for next year**

- \* Choose from among the most important challenges facing the department, with short term impact on students.
- \* Choose a task where evidence is required to determine the best course of action.
- \* Possibilities include the introduction of a new classroom technology, change of format (recitations), a new capstone course, creation of a student organization, portfolio study, etc.

### **Step 3 – Collect model student work, exams, and syllabi**

Collect assessable materials that the program might examine via rubrics

Participate in e-portfolio pilot

## **Step 4 – Develop learning goals for the program, and build an assessment plan around these goals**

- \* Goals should be observable, and focused on outcomes.
- \* Consider use of rubrics to allow for assessment of student work in relation to the goals.

## **In conclusion:**

- \* Steps 1, 2, and 3 – Start now. Complete Step 4 by December. Close loop for first task (Step 2) by December 2010. MS PRR – 2012.
- \* Provide updates to your divisional dean beginning this semester
- \* Send goals and plans to the Associate Provost, so that they may be shared with the Outcomes Assessment Committee
- \* Use CTL resources, and attend workshops.